

Indian by Chance

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22/10/04

I stayed at the visitor lounge at Terminal 2 of the Indira Gandhi Airport. Terminal 2 is for international flights while Terminal 1 is for domestic ones.

Life is a pilgrimage. I went to India after the viva for my Ph.D. in England. I went there on Thai Airways, using a free ticket obtained through my mileage accumulation. God is everywhere I know, yet I was scared of this country. That was the first time I went to a poor country.

India may have a fair share of poverty but it has a strong potential because it has steel. Indian steel must have fueled the industrial revolution in England. It also had made possible the British Empire. Steel gives to a country as much potential as oil does, or even greater, while at the same time being less dangerous to have.

If you want to rule the world, it is important that you should be able to fix the oil's price. So if you have oil then you have no peace, because everybody would try to fix you for the sake of fixing the price of your oil. Therefore even though in theory you should be rich, in practice you would have nothing but war.

With the world's oil drying out the next prized energy item would be uranium. So Iraq finds itself in trouble because of its oil while Iran is coming next on the line for its uranium. Until we mine uranium from other planets we are going to kill one another out before long.

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A prepaid taxi from the airport brought me to a hotel the cost of a room of which was Rs 400. On my way here I was taken to some tourist reservation company, not at the Connaught Place where I was promised. On requiring the fulfilment of their words the driver took me to another reservation office, not far from the hotel, and then let me walk back to the latter alone. I gathered

my rucksack, having put the camera box inside, and walked away saying I was going to complain. In front of the hotel the owner and another big man followed me. One of them caught hold of my wrist. They wanted me to pay for the room I had not slept in. I twisted my arm free and walked away. When they followed me I pointed my finger at them and said that they cheated me. I walked along Panchkuian Marg towards Connaught Place.

The tourist office at 88 Janpath gave me the name of an approved travel agent, saying they own a house boat in Srinagar. There I decided to go by bus and stay for two nights with dinner and breakfast provided, at a family guest-house. That would cost me Rs 1,600.

I went with a boy, whom I knew later to be the son of Fārūq who is the owner of the company. We went to a money changer just across the road. On the way back I bought a bottle of water for Rs 12. The time was already 1:45pm. We will never be able to catch the bus at 2pm, so Fārūq let me stay at his house free of charge for tonight.

This proved a very interesting experience. He and his brother and their family live towards the south-east of Connaught Place. Fārūq drove the car fast and pressed the horn very often. He has three daughters and one son. One of his daughters is neurologically disabled. She sometimes has a fit. One of these fits took away three of her incisors.

We had some fruits with milk and something which looked like saḡu. Fārūq told me this was Ramadan. But after that we were presented with rice and curry. All these were served on metallic plates the bottom of which is as flat and polished as the surface of a mirror. The curry rice was eaten by hand. We washed our right hand into a bowl using the water from a small jar, both before and after eating. I gathered that you are not supposed to lick your hand. Wiping your plate clean of curry with the rice is an art. One never lets anything fall back on to the plates.

Then the children were taught Arabic in the Qur'an by a teacher, who tonight stayed with us. Later the girls watched TV and we were served with a kind of dessert made from coconut milk, sugar and small threads of jelly. I went to bed around half past nine. Early in the morning, I think, everybody woke up to pray. I did not know what time it was, but a beautiful girl told me softly, 'Sleep!' It was very difficult to wake the eldest son who shared my bed. I woke up again for the second time when the twilight came. A young boy was also up already. We sat at the back balcony together watching the pigeons scuttling on the eaves of the buildings opposite us, and at people down on the lane at this early hour of the morning. We are on the third floor. The flat is rented, I guess. Their parents must be land lords in Srinagar, but here they are tenants in Delhi doing their business. It is a good thing what they did, bringing money to Srinagar.

24/10/04

I woke up early, had some try, unleavened bread and sweet, milked tea for breakfast, then goto Connaught Place with Fārūq in his car. The bread was layered, crumbling and brittle. At the bottom are some seeds. It tasted very nice.

On our way we passed the Indian Gate. We reached the office and I walked to Connaught Place, the railway station, Kamala Market, and then back to the office. Then Fārūq drove me over to the bus.

My seat was 25A, which was the one next to last row near a left window. The bus stopped for a long while soon after we passed what I think must be the Red Fort. Following what the others did I bought four bananas for five rupees. I had two seats to myself most of the time, which made it very convenient. I slept on and off. We stopped fairly often, but mostly at those places where foods are not cheap. At one of these places I had some kari pakora for Rs 20 and plain naan for Rs 8.

25/10/04

In the morning we passed one of the most scenic routes, with the road winding its way along steep slopes and gorges dropping down to rivers and streams seemingly directly below us. This must be one of the few passes cutting into the Himalayan range. The route is teeming with soldiers holding guns, machine-guns and metal detectors. I never read the news, so this was a surprise for me. I filled in a form for visitors arriving in Jammu and Kashmir. For this we all got off the bus, walked in a line through a room with metal detector and all. I was the last one to get back into the bus. I call ours a bus since it was small, even though it may run a long distance.

Signs along the mountain roads said, 'Drive like hell, you'll be there.'

The militarial alertness seems out of place with this mountain path, beautifully created by God. When we arrived I was the last one to get off the bus. Around five guides got on to the bus, one of whom produced my name written in block capital letters on a piece of paper produced from his pocket. So I duly followed him but had to pay Rs 30 for the ride on a tricycle-taxi to the boat house. I thought it was going to be a pick-up service free of charge. We crossed from the road to the house on a small boat in which two may not sit side by side.

In the house boat I was fed with two pots of tea. A man who said he made all kinds of jewelry wanted to sell me many of his craftsmanship. I never intended to buy any, and told him so. Yet after a long talk he seemed disappointed.

After it got dark I was brought over the water again to the road, packed into a car which had the back seat opening directly to the boot, in other words an estate car. There in the boot sat a boy, and now also my rucksack.

I had a big dinner, which meant two rices and three curry side-dishes. The house was big, two storeys with an attic. There are

at least six bedrooms, one living room and a kitchen. More than ten people lived here. The room I slept in was spacious, had a double-bed and equipped with a toilet and a boiler. I slept soundly with a hot-water bottle under my blanket.

Inside the living-room we had a kind of basket with a clay pot inside holding coal. This when put under the blanket made it very warm. The idea is similar to the Japanese kotatsu. There were two elderly women, and two elderly men one of whom was the master of the house and owner of the house boat Crown of India while the other said that Fārūq was his nephew. There were one middle-aged couple, two girls, one boy, one middle-aged woman or perhaps one in her twenties, and one male-servant. Early in the morning everybody woke up to pray. I also woke up, but then went to sleep again.

Still I woke up again and got up quite early to enjoy the fresh morning air while walking around the ground in front of the house. Next door is a fortified tower with guards positioned around the clock. You would find the same everywhere in this town of Srinagar. The same also everywhere is how people always want to have the most money from you.

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‘Conscience,’ the writing underneath a picture of Mecca hung on the wall beside the door of the living room here said, ‘the soft whispers of the God in man.’

The owner wanted me to go to the mountain, not that he wanted me to be close to God but because he wanted the money from arranging the thing. But it was too expensive, so I decided to walk into town myself. They wouldn’t have given me a lift there for free, but in the end they did after I had shown my determination I should walk. Still I was left with a carpet dealer who became disappointed when I displayed my resolvedness not to buy. I had two herbal teas with cinnamon and some sizeable seeds, sweetened.

Then somebody dropped me off at the Tourist Reception Centre by his motorcycle. I paid Rs 5 for a map, and had some other information. I walked to Lal Chowk but could find no bookshops that had a Kashmiri–English dictionary I wanted. Then I walked back to TRC again along a different route. I wanted to know where to buy a carpet. A persistent dealer followed me in and out. He wanted me to come with him into some side lanes where he said there was a carpet factory. It was difficult to shake him off. When I walked past Dal Gate people around us became more local and the soldiers more knowing, he said this way was dangerous and suddenly withdrew and turned back.

I walked on because I wanted to find this Pack Track that cuts across Dal Lake in the middle. However I never found such a path since I got lost in the end. Nobody understood English, or in fact my English anyhow. I caught a bus back to Dal Gate for Rs 3.50. When I got off, a man from the same bus asked me what my religion was. I said that I believe in God, and officially I said I am a Christian. We shook hands when I said to him, ‘God bless you!’

I walked back to the house along Dal Lake. The way proved to be very long indeed. I was stopped along the way at least three times and at least twice had to open my camera case to show what was hidden inside.

It started raining and began to get dark. I got into a panic in the dark. I asked people several times for the way. The soldiers were neither helpful, nor did they seem to understand English very well. In fact I think many of them had a tendency to bully. I asked at the bus, I asked at a telephone shop. Nearing the end of the journey I asked at a hotel which seemed to be familiar, since it was actually next door, more or less, to the house to which I was going. At the gate the man from the house pulled up behind me. They had been to the police to report the possibility of my being missing. ‘If anything happened to you,’ he said with a rather serious voice, ‘they catch us.’

I was wet. The drizzle had soaked the long coat they lent me. There was a power-outage again. 'In summer,' the old man said, 'we had plenty of electricity and light.' 'But in winter,' he continued, 'there are always outages.' Kashmiri winter becomes a miserable when there was no electricity to heat anything, when everywhere is white, covered in snow, and the children have no electricity to give them reading light. When the night is long and there was nothing you can do except looking at the darkness. I wonder how wonderful the Milky Way would look in such a night in such a valley like this. In the gas lamp's light I related what I had been doing during the day. Then I had a lovely tea, and asked for one more. The light came and we had a dinner together for the first time, and then I retired to my room and bed. I had had a good time talking with the three children tonight. I gave each of them a pen. They always wanted me to play the game where they made ten windows on a page in a book, simply by drawing the three sides of each one of their rectangular frames with a pen until it cuts through. Behind that, on another page, stands out some words usually a noun or an adjective, which describe you.

The girls were beautiful. One was in her fourth grade at school where she studied English, Urdu and Hindi, but no Kashmiri. Nobody writes this last language though it was their first language.

27/10/04

I woke up around seven, and explored the attic the door of which was left ajar so that I could see the light. We had no electricity until after eight. Then I had my breakfast and went up to my room to prepare myself. I had to do some washing.

I waited for a bus but a man invited me into a car of another person who was going to drop him at Dal Gate. He knew the owner of the house where I stayed. He was disappointed to learn that I did not tell him I was in fact going to Lal Chowk, not Dal gate. But it was only a ten-minute walk from the one to the other.

The somu I go into proved to contain not six but nine passengers. The pollution, both noise and air were very bad on the road. I think everybody in my car except me were Muslim. Coincidentally a police officer wanted to board our car twice with his friend who was a soldier with a machine gun. They said they were having some trouble with the brake of their car. The second time the policeman squeezed in the no-space next to me. He interviewed me, and I told him I was a lecturer, a mathematician who was also interested in languages, and a Christian. He said a village we were passing had over one hundred languages in a rather small area. He was a hindu, and told me something about the caste system and his gods. He said they were building a dam to make electricity in this valley. I think it was a 125MW one.

A man who was helpful to me on the bus seemed to be a friend of the driver. Later he wanted to put me on a sleeper bus to New Delhi. He said he was a student of commerce. I think this might be a kind of team-work to get money from a tourist.

In Jammu I walked and then got on a bus to the railway station. I was just in time to get on a train to Agra. On the train I slept for a while. Then somebody came and claimed my seat. So I found myself a place to sit sleeping between two seats where people were lying.

28/10/04

In the morning a man said I could share his seat on which he had slept. Then while he went to the toilet one sikh came and claimed his seat without a qualm. His method was to ask whether the seat was occupied. I said, 'Yes,' and he took that *yes* to be the *yes* to another question of whether he could sit there. So I left my seat when the other person came back, and later found a better seat elsewhere.

I had to pay some Rs 65 to a train conductor who told me that then I could sit there in the sleeper car 'peacefully.' I enjoy moving

around rather than having to sit in the same place all the time. The seat I have now is on the right side of the train, and that was the hotter one due to the sun.

Half of the people on the street in Agra spend their time chasing after tourists. I did not want to have anything to do with prepaid taxis and rickshaws, so I went from the station to Taj Mahal on foot. The map I had was not a very accurate one, so I lost my way several times. I asked some local people the way, and did not believe what I had been told. So I asked again another one, but what I was told then proved to be a longer way. There are at least three different ways to reach Taj Mahal from the railway station. The shortest one of these passes through a park.

To enter Taj Mahal there was a fee, which for an Indian national was Rs 20 and for others Rs 750. A long queue of people stood in front of the entrance. Instead of entering it I walked along the wall to the river behind the Taj. There were people fishing and relaxing. From the bank we could see people walking on top of the very high red wall. The path to go there passes through a gate, which was open, but there were a few locals gathering there wanting your money for an entrance. I told them that I was here yesterday once. So I did not pay them again.

From Agra I wanted to go to Gandhinagar in Gujarat near Amedabad. But there was no train during that time, so I caught one to Mumbai instead. At the Agra station I met three Thai women and only said hello. They were going to Delhi. A french couple were going to Varanasi. Another European man also wanted to go to Vanarasi. I went to Mumbai,

30/10/04

arriving there around six in the morning

In Mumbai I tried to walk to 'Gateway to India' but it was too far away and I had not enough time. The air here is cleaner, but the

streets are as disorganised as elsewhere. You can smell the sea air.

Somebody at the station had told me the banks will be opened at 8:30. I did not want to wait, so I went by a local train to Panvel. There are trains there every ten minutes. My ticket said Rs 14 but the ticketter charged me Rs 15 for it.

In Panvel I was more than one hour early until the banks here are open. I waited walking along the only road that had some business going on. It runs along the train tracks. All this only to find out that no banks here may exchange money for you. They all said you need to have an account with them in order to be able to do so. Of course that is out of question. I waited more than three hours at Panvel station having bought a ticket for going only to the following station, intending to remain on board the train until it reach Goa without a ticket. That left me around Rs 12 remaining in my pocket.

I am running out of rupees. By and by our train stopped at my station, and it stayed there for a long time. But I did not get out. Instead when it started to move again I walked to the kitchen and asked for some food. I had run out of money, I said, so I had one fried batten for free. Then the manager came and asked what the problem was. He seemed a severe man, so I left.

I stood at the end of a sleeper coach where it is joined the pantry. No ticket examiners came to ask me for a ticket. We were about an hour late, stopping any times to wait for other trains to pass by, so they were going to try to catch up with the schedule or make up for the lost time over the night. We passed through so many tunnels. In the sitting space next to where I was standing there were two catholic sisters travelling. I had eaten nothing all day except some bananas, a Rs 5 worth of crackers given to me from the food stall at Panvel Station when the stall keeper found out I had no money, and some water. What's worse is that there are no aspects of my eating anything tomorrow either. Sundays all banks are closed. I asked for food again at the pantry. This time

the kitchen manager gave me a big take-away curry rice and a 300 ml bag of water. From now on I became very popular among the waiters and kitchen staffs. Everyone acknowledged my presence whenever they saw me. It was one night after a full moon, and the moon put a mysterious spell on the sky at night on the left side of the train.

The fact is that I as I stood there looking at the moonlit landscape I had an excuse for being there at all with my rucksack, and not sitting at a seat, which I had none. A young woman smiled at me from the top berth on this end. She studied commerce, worked now with AOL in Mumbai, and was going home for a visit with her mum. I think she had somebody nearby whom she had just met, who was trying to woo her, for he was jealous at me because of my long and friendly talk with her. She was reading a cheap novel, and went to bed while the moon was lighting a beautiful landscape nearby.

At Gos there was a couple from Germany getting off. I told the man that I had run out of rupees, and tomorrow was Sunday, so they gave me Rs 550 for my 10-euro note. That was about Rs 20 short of the usual current rate. They were looking for a retiring room, so I showed them where it was, then bought a ticket from there to Tiruvanandapuram and got back on the train. The man who sold me the ticket took from me Rs 12 more than the ticket's price.

Back on the train that man who was trying to woo Natasha tried to bully me to get away from her. But I wanted to sleep there near the only door that was quiet since it was at the end of the sleepers, before the pantry. Fortunately enough he was only a bully. Natasha's mother said something to him, and he got a bit more quiet.

31/10/04

Morning came. There were no longer tunnels. We are in a lush,

coastal region. The scenery was so green and fresh. Every ditch was brim full with water. The sea merged with land most beautifully. There was some rain. Then we reached Tiruvananthapuram. I walked the street and had some bean or peanut and other seeds, several times. One small cup costed Rs 1. Opposite the train station was a bus station. Here there were two book stalls. But a dictionary of Malayalam was around Rs 200. I had no money, so did not buy one. From here I took a train to Chennai.

1/11/04

We passed a huge wind farm and some very peaceful landscape. I sat at the beginning of the journey, very early in the morning, in the second-class sitting coach where I lay down and slept until after it was light. We stopped at one junction after another, and as we did more and more people came up until somebody came and claimed my seat. I then went to the sleeper coach, but later on had some trouble with the ticket examiners, who I thought was bullies who became dissatisfied when they could not get any money from me. In the end I went to the ordinary coach. But when we stopped before reaching Chennai and I went to the kitchen to ask for some salt, they found fault with me again while I was sitting on the sleeper section nearby, gargling the brine.

In the ordinary coach filled with people I found a German girl travelling alone. I asked her if she knew where I could buy some vinegar, but she was at all neither helpful nor friendly. So I found myself a different coach. In Chennai I tried to find a supermarket, Food World, but it had run out of vinegar. I walked a street full of clothes-shops, and had a few rotis, but nowhere could I manage to find vinegar. With my money depleting and the burning sore in my throat, I went back to the train station, only to find out that the northern lines leave from Central Station and not from here. So I walked to that place in the night. There the large hall was filled with people sleeping on the floor. All the seats available were occupied. There were big powerful fans blowing, essentially I think for the purpose of chasing mosquitoes away. I found a spot to sit down, and sat on my camera box and slept. The sleeping

proved to be not only hard but difficult. At one point a big man lying nearby tried to shoo me away. I was half asleep. I guess I said to him there were too many people in other places. So I remained sitting there until light. No, it was before that.

2/11/04

I walked around in the fresh air in the morning. But it was still dark. It was 4 am. I walked into an expensive hotel called Sindoori, and asked about the rooms' rate there. It was around Rs 1,800 for a single room. I said I had to exchange some money. They told me to go to the High Court, and showed me where it was on the map. I asked whether I could sit and wait on the sofa there until it became light, and was allowed to do so. So I sat and slept there. That was such a nice nap after such a hard sleep sitting on a hard box. At 8 I asked after some vinegar at the restaurant there, and was handed a glass. But a man and bullied me after money for the vinegar. In the end I bought that bottle, which had only one-tenth of the full content, at the full price, which was Rs 10. I gave him the money, then walked to High Court.

I walked around that area, asking security staffs at several banks, waiting for the banks to be open. Lanes around here are filled with banks and businesses. I walked towards the ocean. On the map there was written 'Beaches', but this turned out to be the name of a train station. Behind the railway track was a port. I stood on a foot-bridge at that station, watching the sea, until 10 o'clock. Then I went to the main State Bank of India to exchange some traveller's cheque in Euro. We used the rate of yesterday as I was not sure whether today's rate would be higher. Today is US's election day. The US dollar had been falling. After this it should begin to rise unless I am mistaken. I walked along a different road, having some food along the street on the way, to the Chennai Central Station. Ticket sellers always tries to frustrate you by telling you to go to the reservation office. Always I had to come back to the former again from that office, which was only a waste of time. I took a train to Vijayavada, and then from there another to Visakhapatnam.

3/11/04

At Visakha I walked around and bought some dictionaries. I had learnt to get away from the station as quickly as possible to have some peace. I also visited a tourist information centre, but every one of these had proved so far to be a mere booking office that wants your money rather than giving you information.

4/11/04

I took a train to Haora. The language had changed, first from Malayalam into something else yesterday. Now it was Bengali. At 5:30 pm I booked into a bed at the dormitory facility of the station. It was only Rs 35, but it is true whatever you do not use is always expensive. After having washed myself I discovered many lice while sitting on the bed to write this, more than plenty enough to make me complain to the manager. That person proved to be called the station master. He seemed helpful enough, but I did not get my money back. After this I opted to sitting in the waiting room instead.

5/11/04

From there I went to Guwahati. On the way there I met a man who said he was a business man selling joint fittings for pipes. He bought some herbal mouth freshener and gave one to me; they are I think one rupee each. We both had some problem with the ticket examiner later because none of us had a reservation. The latter wanted me to pay him close to Rs 400, but the business man said I needed only to give him Rs 150. He said he would complain about this for me. But I decided even that latter amount was too much, so I moved into the ordinary class coach at the next station. There I sat with several young lads, some were doing some jobs I did not understand while others were studying at the Tata Institute somewhere in the middle part of India. That ride was an interesting experience. Later a man and a woman came up, singing some very beautiful folk songs to the hand organ in the hands of the bart.

This instrument was a box you embrace, one side of which was a bellow while the top had a keyboard. The sonorous voice of both singers to the tune played on the organ gives a kind of solitude feeling. The tunes in minor were more like a Hungarian dance- than a Scottish bagpipe tune. Some of the boys in our group later that night drank a little whiskey. Others next morning smoked marijuana.

6/11/04

I bought another dictionary. This town is an important junction, since it connects the whole states in the north-east with the bee-hive in the west. The official tourist centre here gave me some information about Assam. Early on in the morning when I had just arrived I sat in the waiting room after having washed myself. Then I saw a big rat running over a man lying on the floor. Another rat ran after yet another one across the floor where many people were either sitting on some chairs or lying asleep on the floor. The room was well lit by neon lights. I laid my rucksack down after this on top of an empty shelf at least one and a half metres above the floor, and lay down and slept.

I wanted to go to Dibrugar, for no obvious reasons except that it was at the end of the line. According to the timetable there would be two trains going there tonight. So I was not worried when I could find no seats in the first one, and the other coach of the same said it was for military personnel only. But the official timetable I had was wrong. There was supposed to be no second train on Saturday.

What was worse was the LED announcements also said there was going to be the second, nonexistent train leaving from platform number one tonight. So I missed one train and the other train I waited for did not exist. I had to catch the train to Ledo instead. The examiner said I could have a berth in the sleeper. He said I had to pay the difference of Rs 109. But I had unfortunately stopped trusting train examiners, so I explained that I had not

enough money, and how my money had been stolen when I first arrived here. In the end he only took Rs 80 from me, seemingly out of pity lest I had to sit in the infamous ordinary ticket coach. But I found out later that I was given a place in the sleeper only upto Tinsukia. I reckon that should be only Rs 70, therefore I was still over-charged by approximately Rs 10. But that was all right.

7/11/04

By the time we reached Ledo the train was already nearly empty. Ledo was an interesting town. You step out from the train immediately on to a vegetable market. I walked along a row of people sitting on the floor candidly selling fruits and vegetables. Along a footpath bordered by toy-like shops and stalls of various kinds I asked two young girls, probably sisters, where to get a bus to go to Dibrugar. But their parents sitting inside the shop wanted to know what I was talking with their lovely daughters about. Then they did not understand what I said in English and I had to guess my way again.

At last I found out where to catch. But all buses obviously stopped there, so I could not know which one goes to Dibrugar directly. Often when people helped me here I did not know whether they were actually helping the other party getting more money from me. Some people told me it costed Rs 40 to go to Dibrugar by bus. This turned out to be going to Tinsukia first and then catch another bus from there to Dibrugar. But a similar bus to the latter one which goes to Dibrugar was also seen here in Ledo.

The bus going from Ledo to Tinsukia costed Rs 20, and so did the other one from Tinsukia to Dibrugar. Both trips proved to be very interesting. You had a better view of everything including the tea plantations. Tea are grown under a canopy of rather widely-separated trees. I guess this gives them enough light while avoiding direct sunlight. Some of the people who got on the bus spoke a language which could be Ahom, because its rhythm was similar to that of Thai. Sometimes there were some lilts which remind you

of Lao, but I could not catch any word I could understand. Later somebody told me that half of the people who live around Tinsukia, Ledo and Dibrugar are ahom. Each of both trips took about one hour. In Dibrugar I walked to the Brahmaputra, the view of which was so serene here you are almost tempted to swim across. But it was getting dark when I was here, and there were clusters of what I think were mosquitoes nearby, so I started to go back towards the train station.

At the station the ticketter would not sell me an ordinary ticket to go on the 6pm train. The station master explained to me the train had only air-conditioned coaches and nothing else. I learned that 'P' on the timetable means pantry, not people's or plain-, that is ordinary ticket holder as I had previously thought. I was booked into a partition that contained apart from myself some soldiers. Another next to ours had around eight young baptist Christian singers who came to sing here from Nagaland. They were heading back home and were going only as far as Dimapur.

8/11/04

At Dimapur many people got off, and more came up. I was not sitting in my seat, so it was double-booked to another person. Afterwards we had to share among four people a bench that was meant for three. In Guwahati I learnt that this was accidental. Also the commercial manager there told me that the price I paid for my present ticket includes Rs 20 of safety charge on top of the fare plus a Rs 20 reservation fee.

I walked to the Brahmaputra. Here it was very wide, with a few islands in the midst. There were restaurant boats tied to the shore on this side. On the other there were only trees and some houses. I watched two eagles coasting above all the crows. One of them went so far away, until it became a mere dot in the sky. Yet it seemed still to be over the river.

9/11/04

From New Jalpaiguri I walked to Siliguri, which was some 8 km away. Rickshaws wanted me to take them for a ride, but I would have none. I trusted nobody. They all charged tourists too much. The reason I made the trip on foot was that the somu at NJP wanted Rs 90 for a lift to Darjeeling. I was going to try the bus, which has been rumoured to be Rs 55. It leaves from Siliguri, the fact which I found out after some time.

That was an interesting walk I passed by stalls along the streets, most of which sold tea and biscuits from big plastic bottles. I stopped briefly at one hotel, the Breeze, to have a look at their Rs 120 and Rs 150 rooms, and was allowed by the room boy to use the toilet in one of them. More and more people appeared. School children waited for the bus. Some were sitting behind a rickshaw driver; or should one say the propeller? The small, poorly-paved lanes gradually turned into a wide promenade with traffic in both directions separated by islands running along the middle. Stalls sold big, bulbous bulges made of fine threads, which looked like sweets but tasted not so sweet. These are stacked up in columns and mountains. The road went over a bridge. The water below looked dirty, with rubbish strewn everywhere. On the other side I found the Darjeeling bus stand. There was only one official bus, which leaves at 6:30 am everyday with the official fare of Rs 50. The private bus I got on costed me Rs 60.

Darjeeling sits on a lush mountain's top. It is a vibrant market town with positive appearance and atmosphere. There are in operation some toy steam-trains with the rail separation only about one-third that of the normal broad-gauge train. It runs in the morning between Darjeeling and NJP, and in the afternoon between the former and Kurseong. The trains run on coal-powered steam engines. One man from Australia said he had been on the train for the fifth time this time.

From Darjeeling to Kurseong the ticket costed Rs 12 and the ride was terrific. It was like taking a ride for three hours on a wonder-train in some fabled land. The train passed up-coming cars, and both were of comparable sizes, more like a bus and a car passing

each other. The smoke and soot from the burning of coal got on your clothes and blended with the mist or cloud. We were on the same level of the latter. Before we had ridden ten minutes the train stopped. The boiler, I think, needed fixing. Later on we stopped again because the line ahead of us needed to be repaired. We all got off the train to watch the repairing works being done.

The rails are kept at a proper distance apart by measuring with an iron ruler with notches on both sides, representing a capital I with on both ends a cross. A hand augur was used to drill a hole where a square nail one inch wide and four long was to be driven in to fix the rail in place. The wooden-log cross-bar support underneath the rails, normally resting on the levelled ground, is here resting on top of a huge iron bar of I-shaped cross-section that was laid lengthwise in the dug-out ground beneath the track.

Soon the hooting sounded for everybody to be back on board and the journey resumed. Most people got off at Ghum, after which it got dark and the steam puffing from both sides of the boiler interacted with the surroundings, which includes the people and passing cars, gave a unique Victorian scene. We passed by houses, stalls and shops so close that , together with the steam it seemed as though we were on a wonder-ride in some fun-park, except that this was not a ten-minute ride but a three-hour one, and our park is neither man-made nor in a city but indigenously Himalayan.

In Darjeeling I had seen what looked like a soft food, which proved to be hard and tough as the rubber that makes the sole of your shoes. It was made from milk. It does not soften readily in your mouth. A man at a bookshop there told me you have to munch on it left and right. He mimed the action perfectly and said, 'Nhub nhab,' which sounded to me very Thai.

In Kurseong I had some food to eat inside a food shop. It was a kind of curry puff and some sweets. The soldier I asked said there would be no buses going down from the mountain tonight. I was put in a car, and later had to pay Rs 30 for the ride. Then I

had to take a mini cab to Siliguri, and then to New Paljaiguri by a rickshaw. The mini-cab costed Rs 4, but I did not pay because I thought that the man whom the police had asked to accompany me down here had already paid for my part. It seemed so to me. The man got off ahead of me, and then the driver refused to drive me all the way to NJP. It seemed to me he wanted double the money by doing no promised work. The rickshaw was ridden by a boy who agreed to Rs 13 but later wanted instead Rs 50. I could have given nothing or only Rs 10 for doing that. I then travelled next to Patna.

10/11/04

Patna is a junction town with nothing in particular of interest. Right in front of the station there is a temple where you may get a duck's eye view of the surroundings. I got up to the second floor of the building after having deposited my shoes at a counter. There I took some photographs of the crowd below. Several people flocked around me and would not leave staring at me daftly. A young girl came through them to me and gave me slices of apple and some sweets. When I hesitated, she sweetly said, 'Prasād hai!' These tasted good. Then a man came eying me queerly and said he wanted to be my friend. I told him I wanted to be left alone, and walked away from him and the crowd. He said after me, 'OK, dear,' so I said to myself he must be a homosexual hindu.

I walked along the streets but could find nothing of interest. In the evening I bought a bottle of fruit vinegar made from sugar-cane. It costed Rs 20 while another, made from Jamun, was Rs 25. Synthetic vinegar here is called simply 'vinegar', whereas fruit vinegars are called 'sirga', for instance 'jamun ka sirga.' I sat at the waiting room tonight.

11/11/04

I caught a train before five this morning to Vanarasi. The surrounding fields looked nothing special. There were discs around

eight inches in diameter, made I think from cow dung mixed with water. These were stuck up on brick walls of houses to let them dry. I guess that they are feedings for cattle in winter. At Vanarasi I walked to the Kashi Vishwanath Mandir, which is the central hindu temple around which the city revolves. I looked at it in front, from the outside but within the ring of the security guards surrounding. The place was heavily protected. There is a mosque standing beside it, separated by a high wall of metallic bars. There was a standing long queue of people waiting to enter the temple. Outside on the streets there were stalls and stands selling hundreds of idols like Ganesh, *etc.* Walking along the streets every minute or so a rickshaw would yell at you accosting you to get on his vehicle. If you say 'No,' he often would say 'Why?' That is his way of getting you involved in his harassing conversation, which barbarically is still acceptable here. In a way the Indian society is still stuck with the Victorian past where pollution, poverty and poor conditions of the people is the norm. In Darjeeling I remembered when a man cut my queue I pushed him away, to which he unashamedly said, 'Be a gentleman!' So I told him I was not a gentleman. But I never cut queues, neither would I do so without a qualm anyhow.

I walked to the Ganga. There were steps. A flock of buffalo with curled horns and many people were bathing. These latter were in the water upstream of where the buffaloes were. A man in fanciful dress and head band in orange came up to me and asked for money to satisfy his dressing appetite. I wanted to be alone with the Ganga, so I asked him politely to go away. His clothes were in a much better condition than the rags I am wrapped in by the way. But he would not go away, the more revolting it was since he understood English very well. He recited the name Vishnu and said something about God. I must have then called him names like 'murderer', 'robber', 'thief', 'godless people', and the like. I told him not to mention my Father's name unless he believed in Him.

Back in Darjeeling at the man who had cut my queue I said, 'Rubbish!', to which he replied, 'Yes, I am rubbish.' At that I was amazed. He was well-dressed, in his suit jacket and all. Perhaps not only littering but also rubbish are acceptable here.

I walked to the Banaras Hindu University. The Central Office was closed because this was some holiday. But the library was open. There were some people studying inside. I only had a look from the outside. There was a rotunda with a reading room normally found at old libraries in the UK. The British-, the John Rylands University- and the Manchester Central Library's, as well as the Library of Congress in the US all have this kind of reading-room rotunda. All of these are old libraries.

I walked to the Vishwanath Mandir. Here both the ground- and the first floors had their floors paved with marble and the walls with tiles inscribed with Sanskrit verses together with Hindi-, and sometimes English translations, of extracts from the Gītā, the various Upanishad's and Dhammapada. The verses were so profound and obviously reach God. But everybody just came here to touch their foreheads on the walls below these plaques. Such godless interpretation of most godly scriptures! You know people's faith through the works they do.

Out at the gate the two men who took away my shoes now wanted Rs 10–20 in return for the inconvenience they had given me. I said I did not have enough money. When I walked away they pulled at my rucksack. Another man who was at the door of the room told me to listen to them. This third man seemed to have come with two women. I asked him how much I should give them, and he answered that any amount was fine. So I fished around inside my pocket and gave the Rs 4 I found there to the two men. In hindsight those three gave them Rs 3, why should I, only one, have given them Rs 4? And they demanded from me Rs 20, these robbers and thieves! So near godly writings, yet these godless creatures. Well, you always learn about people's faith through the works they do.

I walked to Mandua Dih Station, then caught a local train to Varanasi Junction. There I had again a thali vegetarian meal. They would not give me a receipt, and one of the man told me that he was a hindu and therefore spoke no English. All this was told me in English for that matter. So I did as he had suggested me himself, that is went to find the manager at the DPS room. Both this room

and the restaurant were on Platform 5. That was why I could not find the latter this morning, since I had been searching for it on Platform 1. The waiting rooms were also here on this platform. I think this helps preventing the roguish public interfering with the more decent people.

I told the manager his men at the restaurant would not give me a receipt for the food I ate. 'He said he was a hindu and speaks no English,' I told him. At this the eyes of the manager suddenly brightened. He woke up from his sitting posture and walked to the restaurant with me. My receipt then became possible, and the two men cowed.

I sat and reclined the night inside the gents' waiting room. On the first floor at Platform 1 the dormitory costs Rs 50 a night and looked clean. But I did not dare trust there would be no bugs, neither the lice or some other funny creatures.

There is one and only one God. You call Him 'Yaweh', 'Father', 'Allah', 'Brahma', or 'Truth.' The scriptures all understand Him, but the Talmud has nothing to do with Judaism, the Gita and Upanishad's Hinduism, the New Testament Christianity, the Qur'an Islam, nor Buddha's teaching anything to do with Buddhism. In his PhD thesis in 2004 Tiyanpan calls God 'Superset.'

12/11/04

I wanted to go to Sarnath, and went to the booking office to buy the ticket. The staff there said that it was better I went by rickshaw, since there would be no trains going there until 10:30 and the former costed Rs 10, only four rupees more than the ticket for the latter. So I went over to a rickshaw, said 'To Sarnath', and sat on board the vehicle. We were already moving when a man, another rickshaw driver, came to us and asked where we were going. Then he told the driver of my rickshaw never to take fares less than Rs 110. So I came back and bought myself a train ticket.

Absolutely nobody could help me on the platforms. Staffs said the train left at 10:30, some 11, yet some others that it was 12 noon. The information regarding the platform from which this mysterious train was going to leave varied from 1 to 5.

At the restaurant there were no chapatis for the thali meal, and toasts and butter was Rs 10 for four pieces of toast. I did not have any. In front of the restaurant I met a beautiful girl from Germany who had on her rucksacks both on the back and in front. She was only travelling, and liked Taj Mahal very much, saying it was very beautiful. I would not have known whether this was true; I only saw its roof from the outside. She said the museum at Sarnath was very interesting, and that it costs Rs 2, on top of the Rs 100 entrance fee to get into the ground. She did not see any deer in the deer park I saw on my map, however. She was so beautiful I forgot to ask her what her name was. Then her train came and she went on board at Platform 5 at around 9:45. That was the last I saw of her.

In our talk I told the girl Indians might be still stuck in its Victorian past. This would have explained the poor condition of the people and the mentioning of gentlemen nowadays. The caste system also played a part in this. But she said it does not help. And she was right. She paid for the ricksha ride to Sarnath Rs 60. 'I could have gone with them all the way to Sarnath,' I told her, 'and then only paid them 10 or 20 rupees.' 'But,' I said, 'I had rather not do that.' 'They might have beaten you up,' she said. And well they might have. I agree with her that could have raised an uproar at the least. But on the other hand uproars are worse than calmness but better than inaction. 'There would have been police around anyway,' I mused audibly.

I like this building at the platform number 5 of this station. The ceiling is ten metres high, with only I-sectioned iron crossbeams between every pair of which is a curved little vault covered in plaster. The paint of all the parts looks decades old.

Sitting here in this building, watching the perfect summer day outside, I understand why this country had been a perfect summer home for the English. Here one may play cricket all year round. Before my eyes stood an industrial cargo wagon the number of which reads, 'Nein! Nein! Fear swan sick,' that is to say, 99420. At around 13:30 I was put on the belated 12:30 train that I thought was going to take me to Sarnath. But Sarnath and Saṭna sound almost the same in Hindi that I had been put on a wrong train., the Satna Express going westwards instead of eastwards which should have been towards Sarnath., heading for Durg. I sat in a nearly empty second class coach. This train went most of its way along minor routes, but it is a very fast train. Very few people got on and off the coach at each station we stop. Ours had its doors at both ends shut, therefore we were very secluded and quiet. The food along the way is also relatively cheaper than on other routes. We passed through woods interspersed with fields, then through forests. We crossed over a very wide river in the midst of which there were sand islands in the form of wavy dunes. The pace of life of the people we passed, as well as those who got on and off at intervals, seemed to be slower than elsewhere, rather more human. I managed to get plenty of sleep after it got dark.

13/11/04

In the morning there was some mist. Before the train reached Durg, its destination, I got off at Raipur Junction. There was nothing much around the station there except a few streets strewn with several shops mainly selling fruits, food, or grocery. I ate two samosa with chillis, which costed me five rupees. Then I bought a ticket to Aurangabad because the brochure I had said it is easiest to go from there to both Ajanta and Elloha caves. The timetable said that I must travel first to Manmad, then change into another train. It showed Manmad as the last station on that route. The arrival time would be 0:40 the next day. I thought that would be the last station for the train, but actually the same train carries on to another route shown on another page. I should have noticed this, since there was no box around the arrival time shown, and at the bottom of the column was written a number 44, that of the next

route it carries over to.

14/11/04

So I ended up in Pune at seven in the morning. There had been a thick fog before we arrived here, but it became clear once we reached the town. I had 5 rupees of pakoda and salted chillis in front of the station. Looking around me I only saw many motor-tricycles parking and some buses running. I looked at the streets and the buildings, but the town did not seem to me to be interesting. So I got back to the station and hopped on the next train to go to Mumbai. It would mean a round-about trip that way, but this seemed to be the shortest route to take to get to Aurangabad from here.

The train to Mumbai passes through numerous tunnels. My ticket was examined once on the train. The west coast mountains looked as beautiful as when I saw it more than a week ago. I saw some towns below, beautifully situated in valleys, or at least it seemed that way looking at them from afar.

At Mumbai I walked to the Gateway to India. Many boats took people over to the Elephanta Island just off the coast. I took a walk inside the Taj Mahal Hotel, since it was so hot outside in the sun. The hotel boasts visits by several celebrities, including Queen Elizabeth II, President Clinton, John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Sidney Sheldon, *etc.* There were photographs in black and white displayed in a show case along the corridor to prove this.

Out on the street there were many second-hand book dealers. Trolleys selling fruit- and sugar-cane juices. At a city ground in the midst of Fort Mumbai there was a cricket match going on. There were also other people playing, also cricket. I asked for the way to the railway station at a Tata Department Store. The inside of the store is lovely cool. You seldom find shops with an air-conditioner producing such comfortable temperature like this in India. A young girl at the counter inside said that she was from

Nepal, but could speak no Nepalese. Her name was Salika. When I asked her whether it is the name of a bird her male colleagues decided it must be the crow. But in fact she was a fine girl.

I then walked to the Back Bay, and there sat looking at the beautiful outlines of the buildings on the opposite side of the bay. Mumbai itself looked very European. The Town Hall has Greek steps and columns in front. The Chhatrapati Shivaji is more Victorian than gothic. Its name was formerly VT, Salika said, for Victoria Terminal. The present name was the name of a ruler. But most people still call it VT even nowadays. The changing of the name was said to be political. A refuge from the busy ground floor at Victoria Terminal is the restaurant on the second floor. The system of numbering the floors here follows the British system where one presumes a floor must be flat and not simply resting on the ground, whereas in the case of the US system all one seems to keep in mind is that a floor must have walls.

This restaurant is where I had my thali vegetarian meal for Rs 22. At 6 pm I walked into a ladies waiting room without knowing, and there had a shower. That raised sufficiently a havoc which started while I was in my shower. That was when I first realised what I might have done. But I finished my shower first, and then said I did not know. I merely followed one couple there. Normally a wife may enter a male waiting room with her husband. What I did not notice was that the husband in this case stopped at the door and did not enter the room.

I had a second thali meal at the second-floor restaurant. Then I caught a train to go to Manmad at 8:40 pm.

I sat on a piece of newspaper on the floor on the train and fell asleep.

15/11/04

This was how I missed Manmad again for the second time. One

hour later I got off at the station following Manmad. The train was twenty minutes late. The station master looked at my ticket. I explained to him that I got lost changing my trains. He said I should pay fines.

But I had no money, and it was Sunday, I explained to him, the bank was closed. He then wanted to have my pen, even in exchange of his. This pen I wore on my breast pocket has a modern design. It was made of plastic, all transparent. Its colours were that of the French flag, that is blue, white and red, since I had got it from a french education fair in Bangkok. Written on it in red was the website www.edufrance.fr. That station master was not the first person who wanted this pen. A few others had expressed their interest in it before, for example one at the place where I stayed in Kashmir and the pantry manager on the train when I went down south to Trivandrum. I had not known people would like pens so much here, otherwise I could have brought along with me the few dozen I have at home. You get so many pens for free elsewhere you take these things for granted.

I waited a few hours at Manmad for a connection to go to Aurangabad. This latter ride was really pleasant I dozed off for a while. I thought it must have been hours but actually it was only an hour. So I had not missed my stop. We had ridden through a warm, sunny countryside, and the breeze coming through the windows of the train was so lovely it had lulled me to sleep. The sleep was so refreshing even though it was only for a short time.

In Aurangabad I visited the India Tourism Office, and then took a bus to Ellora. I liked the scenery along the way there. Mountains here are flat-topped. They are the result of the erosion caused by a river. When you are on their top you never notice that you are on a mountain. You do not notice where the river was until you came close to the rim of the cliff leading down to it.

Ellora caves were carved both out of and into the rock. The whole cliff of solid rock was cleft into, and carved out to make columns,

rooms, halls, statues and temples. It holds you speechless when you see it.

Textures of the rock are mixed. Some were porous, some were not. I walked firstly up the cliff circling the outer boundary of the big excavation. This was surrounded by water drainage carved in the rock 20"-30" wide and deep. We could look at the roof of the temple in details from here. The four lions standing on the circle that is in the shape of a flower in the middle of the large roof top gives you some idea what stone-carving could do.

It was only a few hours before the cave was closed. Today was Monday. Ajanta caves close on Monday, and Ellloha Tuesday. A German couple I met told me that here these structures were carved into rock whereas in China this was not the case. I guess he meant that over there they were cut out of clay with high iron contents which solidifies when exposed to the air to form stones. This is the case with Angkor Wat in Khmer. But then again Angkor Wat was built, not carved.

The ticket to go inside the caves costed Rs 250 for foreigners, 25 times more than for Indians. So I told the guard I came back to look for something I had forgotten inside the caves, and was allowed to get in. The temple was carved out of rock of the cliff, and the cliff surrounding it was cut clean like tofu. Surrounding the temple were corridors with figures in high relief on the walls. Apart from these on both sides of the temple were hall upon hall with pillars and steps. Many of these were occupied by bats. This you could tell by the putrid and sickly smell produced by their excretions. There were a few balconies that command a superb view of the valley. Some Indians told me all the caves were here. But obviously there were also others along the cliff that you had to walk to. So I spent most of my time in the big cave.

Then I walked up the same route up the cliff again, and then to the top of a waterfall. I wanted to see the other caves. But it was getting dark, so I ran to the furthest one first and then retraced

my steps back slowly. Of these remaining caves I only managed to see them from the outside. They were mostly made in three-storeyed structure. From the outside they seemed like flats where those who visited the temple stayed. But I think there are also Buddhist sculptures in some of them. So they might not be only for accommodation after all. There were a few beautiful quads where the balconies were surrounded, except for the opening in the front, by rock faces. There were many people on the bus on the way back, so I had to stand most of the way. I did not have the Rs 15 fare, so the ticketter accepted the 13 rupees I had. I found a black cricket on my arm. When the others saw it they seemed to be rather afraid. In the end I saw it again, still alive, so I picked it up and threw it out the window.

People liked to ask you from which place you come. Sometimes I was asked to where do I belong. This time somebody on the bus asked me this question again. I told him I came from God.

Back at the train station in Aurangabad I had again a thali meal. But the puris were cold and I found a stone in my soup. The stone was quite big, for it measured some half centimetre. I complained even though I knew not what for. They never listen to your complaints here. Anyhow they have never answered mine. After this I sat in the waiting room trying to write, but fell asleep before long.

16/11/04

I woke up and had a shower, or rather only washed myself because the faucet was too low to be a proper shower. Then I walked to the bus station and got on a bus for Ajanta. The scenery along the way was very nice. We saw some mountains again with flat tops. Then it became only fields and crops. There were fields of sunflowers. There were haystacks with pointed tops. The bus costed Rs 55, and stopped not at Ajanta caves but at the T-junction not very far from it. From here to the caves another bus costed 6 rupees. These latter were green buses. The ones with air-conditioning costed 10 rupees.

I tried to convince people at Ajanta that I had probably left something there and merely came back to try to find them. But nobody would let me do as I wished. So in the end I sat at the ticket-checking entrance condemning them of corporate stealing because they would not look for the fictitious things for me, and would not let me do so myself. After a good while doing this I just got up and got in.

If Elloha struck me speechless, the sculptures of Buddha and his disciples in the second cave made me admire those who made them so much. They had clearly shown their faith through their works. Most, if not all of the caves were of the same layout, a large hall with columns has at the far end a chamber housing a sculpture of Buddha and those of his disciples, along the walls were small doors into rooms probably for meditation and sleeping for the monks. The doors were probably made of wood, for nothing of them remained to be seen. On the upper stone frame was a circular hole 3" in diameter and approximately 3" deep this must have been for the axle around which the door revolved. Sitting thus snugly in the rock these rooms must have been an excellent place to do meditation in. Their ceiling are the 20 metres or so of rock in the cliff above them.

There are also rooms which open towards-, and command a good view of the valley below. Some of the halls have high, arched ceilings. Some of these have ribs on them. The ceilings are normally painted in square tiles with flower patterns while the walls are painted either with pictures depicting some stories or square tiles of Buddha's image.

In one of the halls the beams have figures having their backs against the ceilings, staring down at you. Often there are either relief or picture of a man and a woman holding each other in a loving posture. Imagine the effect these would have had on the monks!

After the caves I crossed a bridge to the other side of the valley

and walked to the top of the cliff. Up there it was flat, with grass and dark-brown rocks. There were also cactuses and trees such as those that grow in deserts or on rocks. From up here you can see the bird's eye view of the cascading waterfalls at the far end of the horseshoe shaped valley. For a long while I sat on the edge of the cliff looking at the bowls of the falls.

I walked along a path which led to the top of the waterfall. Then I stepped over the stream, walked on the rocks, and then followed the rain-water drainage and paths which led me across the parts of the cliff over the caves, to a climb which led eventually down to the transfer buses. Parts of this climb seemed ancient. Through an opening in the vegetation I looked at the caves and felt indescribably at home. This could have been, must have been where I used to live in my previous life. This is why what I told them was not a sheer excuse of my being here. I needed no excuse for being here. It was none of my own works but God's working. I had not decided to be here but was put here. And He is the only one always, which justifies everything, or anything He does for that matter. In the shade I closed my eyes and remembered the climb I made over a thousand years ago in this very spot, just to be by myself. At that time I used to watch from here people going about their businesses of the evening at the caves.

At the T-junction I met some people who were also going to Jalgaon. They came from Dule, which is only 90 kms away from here. I also wanted to go to Jalgaon because it was nearer to this place than Aurangabad does. However, instead of the red bus they put me in a nicer semi-sleeper one. The ride to Jalgaon costed Rs 30. The seats could be adjusted into a curved, comfortable space-craft position. The ride was very pleasant and comfortable, and the day was nice.

At Jalgaon from where the bus dropped me I walked 3 kms to the railway station. The trouble with India is that people have too many children, despite the country being already overpopulated. So the norm is very selfish. Sometimes you think a person asked you about something because he was concerned about your wel-

fare, but it soon turns out to be that he is merely trying to catch you unaware for whatever reason of the wicked purpose he has.

17/11/04

I sat sleeping for one hour at the waiting room before waking up to catch the train to go to Ahmedabad. After it was light I happened to find myself sitting in the wrong class. So after my ticket was looked at I got off at the next station, and a few minutes later caught another train, an express. The day was nice and sunny, which was usual. People play here cricket in the fields and everywhere. There were a few eagles or hawks cruising the air above. The fields we passed include papaya, banana and sugar-cane. We crossed a wide river. It was not until just before 2 pm when we reached Ahmedabad. Here the shaking Minarets were not that small, but rather slender and tall. What they were built for I do not know.

I searched for a bookshop and found at last the area where book-sellers were plenty. The used books were rather expensive. In the end I bought from one shop a two-volumed dictionary of Gujarati. Half of the shops here are like stalls with their shallow backs. But the one I bought the dictionary from had a first floor and a basement. They were in such a hurry to shut the shop that the husband turned off all the lights while I was still packing everything back into my rucksack. So I demanded, requesting having of no avail, that the light be turned on again. I said it would be quicker if I could see. Back at the station, in the waiting room I met a man from New Zealand and a woman from Poland. They had been travelling together for two months and the man said they came here for the yoga. Doing yoga in a natural setting in Himachal Pradesh had been impressive, the man whose name was David said. I talked to them about God and the Gita, about mathematics as a language, and about languages. I wrote down for David the names of the trilogy by C S Lewis, the autobiographies of Hoyle and Gandhi, and 'The rhyme of the ancient mariner' by Coleridge. He seemed eager to learn, so I told them how I always teach my students, and how some of them have been doing very well. I consider also this a

teaching, for our God's Āyudhya's Defence teaches on a non-profit basis. Therefore we can teach not only in classes but also in all kinds of situation.

18/11/04

Morning talked with a couple from Spain. I caught a train at 6:40 to Samakhiali. Along the way we passed a low land with the ground brimming with water. There was a vast expanse of shallow water everywhere. As far as the eyes could see were either this thin film of water, muddy ground, or beds of dried mud. We crossed a wide river. There was a long road bridge and a few wind-turbines.

The area is wholly flat. Only in a very distant horizon did you see sometimes some low hills. The same type of weed thrived everywhere except in those over-saturated ground. It grew in bushes higher than a man standing. Many branches shoot from the ground together presumably from a common bulb underground. From these branches project leaves, which are compound, and hang the pods, curved like those of green pea but not as long. The land was desolate. You see a house only infrequently and less often a town.

My impression of Samakhiali was that it is a desert town, though the same weed can be seen everywhere. The town itself stood on the other side of the motorway. The eastward branch of this latter had a sign saying that a toll-gate is 500 metres away. There were both metre-gauge- and broad-gauge tracks. The former one is for local trains, whose numbers contain three digits, whereas the latter are for national-network ones the numbers of which contain four digits. There were some shops selling food on both sides of the motorway. There was also one petrol station.

It must be either the food or the water in the cooler-containers which was not clean, because my stomach went funny after a while here. The toilet at the station was locked with an old-fashioned type of lock, but which had inscribed on it a '1987'. At one food-stall where I had a thali meal for both lunch and dinner the toilet

was simply the field of weed behind it. You carry with you a bottle of water for the after-cleaning, and pick your own spot. Rats, and perhaps hogs, abounded between the kitchen at the back of the stall and your toilet the field, but beyond this you are more or less left alone and it was quiet. The weeds have prickly thorns, so you do not wish to brush against them.

At night I slept on a bench in the waiting room. I turned the ceiling fan on to drive some mosquitoes away.

19/11/04

I caught a train in the morning to go to Bhildi. This train is a metre-gauge- not a broad-gauge one. Soon after we set off two men got on board. They started to bully me by demanding I move away from the door in order that they could take my place, which I refused to do. They pressed against me so close that I feared I would fall off the running train. So I pushed them back. But they got hold of my foot and stole one of my shoes. I went after them and got the shoe back. I heard them saying to each other the word 'Musalman', so I guessed they were Muslims. As I had always prayed for Muslims, I suddenly felt a kind of good will towards them and stood aside to let them pass at the next station because they seemed to want to get off. But my good will was returned with such an ingratitude that they grabbed my foot and tried to pull me off the train, which had already started to move.

After this I reported at one station to the railway company and then at another to the police station there. I became well-known and people talked about me everywhere on the train and on platforms. I would have preferred they had helped me when the incident happened instead. I am greatly afraid I would contract some dreadful disease through the wounds.

At Bhildi I had something to eat, but the food were very unhygienic because there were flies everywhere. At night I took a rest in the waiting room here.

20/11/04

Very early in the morning I took a train to go to Jodhpur. Here I went to a Tourist Reception Centre, only to find out the man there wanted ten rupees for every pamphlet that is written explicitly 'Not for sale.' Then I walked to the Sadar Market to find a bookshop for my Rajastani dictionary, but fell badly sick on the way there. I used the toilet on the third floor of one shop. Obviously its owner was a rich business man. The building was very modern. I asked to lie down a while but they saw that I was sick and told me that I should leave now. From one pharmacy I bought an antibiotics. There were ten tablets. But when I asked for a receipt and they saw that I was very sick they took away both the medicine, less the one pill I had already taken, and the receipt, and gave me back some of my money. With all the books in my rucksack I walked the two kilometres slowly back to the station. There I had a tomato soup and then took a long rest.

21/11/04

I took a train to Jaisalmer. Along the way the flora slowly disappeared. Most of them are thorny weeds. The sand increased as we went along, until it was flying everywhere and hung thick in the air inside our coach. Now I know why people in the desert cover their hair and faces.

Jaisalmer is a small town but has a fort on sandstone mountain as imposing as the one at Jodhpur. I found a tourist reception centre only to find out this was Sunday and it was closed. There was a beautiful lake with nice rajasthani structures built around it. It stood magnificently against a backdrop of the desert, more correctly speaking it looked so serene doing so. A fiddler sat on the floor demonstrating his musical instrument. These and the recorded media of his music he sold.

I waited for a bus to go to Kolayat to catch a train. They wanted to sell me a ticket I think at double the normal price. At 8:30 pm I

got on such a bus. I told them I had been robbed and was without money, then I only paid them around what I thought was the usual price.

22/11/04

The bus dropped me off at 2:30 am at the junction of the Kolayat by-pass. From here to Kolayat is some six kilometres, but they told me it was only one. I started to go there on foot, but lost my way after one and a half hour. The moon was setting and the night, except for the light from the stars and the occasional light from places at the horizon, was dark. The sand on both sides of the road stood out faintly against the tarmac. But when the road became covered in sand you lost your way.

It must have been around 4 pm when I heard the sounds from some loudhailers of religious chantings coming from the light sources to the right. I heard some bells ringing and guessed that must be coming from a railway station. So I broke off at a right angle southwards towards these. Along the way I stumbled upon another road, then a barbed wire fence, which I found a place to step over, and then a thicket of thorn I could not pass through. So I turned back and followed the polaris until I reached again that second road, then followed it until I found myself in Kolayat where I wanted to be.

I had been able to see a few satellites and some shooting stars. Also the Milky Way shone faintly visibly. I had been walking alone in the middle of the night in a desert, and it was as cold as the day was hot. The road was wholly unlit, and in the desert things around you only showed as faint shadows. I heard dogs barking in the distance and hoped they were no wolves. I had a great apprehension for desert snakes but had met none.

Except for a few vagabonds the station was deserted and dark. But I was already grateful what platform I had found had got a sign saying, 'Kolayat.'

23/11/04

I stood waiting at the station until the light came. The night had proved to be adventurous. One man jogged on the platform at around six. After it was light I met a young man who said he was a school teacher teaching English, Maths and Hindi. He had been elected the representative or the president of all the 17 villages around here. Every once in a while somebody came and stared at me. I walked to the lake, which was only nearby. One hindu was washing his hair with the water. Others lined both sides of the streets, sitting on a piece of blanket. They had their things in a bunch. In front of them piled some logs burning fire for cooking, and I guess for warmth.

I caught a single-carriage train to Lalgah. The train was about 15 metres long, and had the traction and passenger's space in the same car. Many times it ran in passages which run below the ground level, cut into the ground with earth on both of its sides like walls. When it did this the train became completely covered you could not see it from afar.

The day was very bright and hot. At Lalgah I was put in another train for four kilometres to Bikaner. From here I took a train to go to Ajmer, but missed the train-changing at Phulera and found myself instead in Jaipur. Here I saw the Hawa Mahal, and after a long walk was back at the station via the Rajasthani Tourist Centre. I rested in the first-class waiting room at the station, which was not really first-class because some vagabonds also slept there.

24/11/04

I took a passenger train in the morning to Ajmer. These train have no numbers, and were only to transport, I think, people to the fair. There was a cart track running along the line. On the way we saw camels coming back from Pushkar. In Ajmer I walked to the bus-stop and got on a bus to go to Pushkar. The bus had to wrap its way up some climbs on the top of which we had a beautiful

view of Ajmer. Walking paths and steps cut through some of these wonderfully turning curves. It could have been a pleasant walk to go on them.

In Pushkar I walked to the lake. But some hindus barred my passage and demanded money. When I gave them nothing they told me that I should leave.

I went to the Mela Ground. There were some camel races. Camels are much bigger than horses. They are about the same size of a small elephant, but slenderer and more mobile.

Often Indians play daft, pretending that they did not understand you English when actually they did, in order to have what they want towards some of their selfish aims. I looked at the Shilp-gram Fair where handicrafts were sold. There were tapestries and painted cloths for wall decoration. Then I watched videos at the booth of the Rajasthani Tourism inside the Tourist Village.

The village was a success. It had some tents with doors and locks on them, and some bungalows in an orderly surrounding. No locals may stray in here unless they were well-dressed and looked clean.

A programme called Palace on Wheel was also a success. It replaces a hotel by an exclusive, luxury train. It allows tourists to see Rajasthan without having to mix with local people. Inside the train they build friendships among their own peers, and from there develop the good impression of their experience.

Between 7 and 9 pm there were folk dances and music at the Tourist Village. I sat on the seat of a small amphitheatre which has around six or seven steps, under a nearly-full moon. The latter two days from now shall be full. The night was light, and the performances except for the uses of spotlights, microphones and speakers had been superb. Dances like these are best lit with bon-fires and torches.

The night was nice and cool. I caught a bus back to Ajmer at ten, and was there by eleven. From the bus station I walked to the railway station and waited inside a waiting room there.

25/11/04

In the morning I walked from the station to the Ana Sagar lake in the middle of the town. I sat there all morning. There were three open halls there made of marble where you can sit and relax in the shade, looking at the lake and the mountain behind it. At the far end there was some metamorphic rock outcrops. A few flocks of birds were circling in lines above the lake.

The water was stagnant and still. There were some green lichens floating on the surface. The ducks kept their heads underwater most of the time, feeding themselves. There were quite a few people around this morning, but the place was not crowded. Behind us was a park where you could walk and sit on the grass.

At three thirty I caught a train to Purna, and spent my time moving around among the pantry and the sleeper because I had no booking. I never found out where the general coach was. This was a metre-gauge train, and its kitchen was much smaller than those on a broad-gauge ones. I talked with the cook, who was very young, and with serving staffs. I had my dinner inside the pantry, and could pay only Rs 30 when they wanted Rs 45. I had wanted a vegetarian pulao, which they did not have. There were no vegetables, so they gave me what meal they had.

On the way to Purna I was sitting in a corner trying to get some sleep. A man came and lay down on the corridor path. He wanted me to move, which I refused to do. He started by and by to be aggressive, so I grabbed the first thing I came across, which happened to be a small pair of scissors with its blades just over one inch long. He went immediately away, but told everyone I had a knife. I was glad for I thought then the police would come. I wanted to report his bullying me to them. But only one man came with a torch and peeped in at the door of the resting train; then went away.

The following morning I saw another man wearing a balaclava, and was accusing him of having bullied me the previous night. I told the railway security staff I wanted to report that. But he said after asking the man was not on the train at 1:30 in the morning. He was at home with his wife. Actually he was an electrician coming to replace some spent batteries on the train. So I apologised them.

Then I saw the man I wanted sitting in the corridor. So I reported again. But our man was scared and argued I had a knife. It seemed I had a 10-inch long blade. Moreover he was a soldier. I said to him he should not bully people.

26/11/04

I am on the train most of the day, doing nothing much except looking out the window at the scenery. I still had to move around, but in the most part managed to find some seats. Towards the end of our journey it was a mess. Ticket examiners had left, somebody, had locked the general compartments' doors on the inside, I guess, so the few sleepers next to them became a chaos.

At Purna I got on within an hour a broad-gauge train heading for Secunderabad. I did not have a reservation, but did not feel like joining the swarm of people trying to pay more money to get one. So I only stood apart and looked on as though I did not know what was going on. When later they wanted more money from me I told them that I had no money since it had been stolen while I was in Delhi, which is true if you consider money obtained by fraud stolen money. 'Cōrī karanā,' I repeated again and again, until the TTE said I could stay on without a reservation. I later became well-known, people saying that I travelled without a ticket. But what I lacked was only a reservation not a ticket. I had paid more than 100 rupees for my ticket.

27/11/04

Towards Secunderabad towns and buildings began to look more modern and decent. In Secunderabad I walked to Hyderabad Station via Hussain Sagar Lake. Secunderabad is a part of Hyderabad.

They said you have to take a taxi, but it is more pleasant to walk.
I do not remember having seen any, or many cows.

The city looked and felt much like other south-east Asian cities. I visited the India Tourism and then the Telugu University. There was an art exhibition in preparation there. The exhibition was interesting. It occupied three or four floors. There were works going on but I got in and looked around. I bought some old books written in Telugu I could not read, only because they were cheap and I thought I might be able to do something with them in the future.

28/11/04

I was on a train via Vijayavada to Tirupiti. If you sit at a far end of a train there are less people but there is also less food selling around. On the other hand if you sit in the middle of the train there would be plenty of food but also lots of people fighting with you for space. So I sacrificed one good seat after another trying to get to the food.

At Vijayavada there is plenty of food, and there was also the restaurant where I used to eat before. But what I liked best was the Rs7-each lemon rice, wrapped in two layers of paper the inner one of which was semi-transparent and water-impermeable, and the outer one a brown recycled paper. The rice was cooked with some mild curry, probably cumin. And there is some pickled lemon on top. We reached Tirupiti at night, and right away I was on another train heading for Pondicherry.

During the night sleeping people fill up most of the floor space of railway station lounges no matter how large they are.

The sun is the same, but morning sun seems brighter by far than the evening sun. This may be because the morning air is clearer.

God says, 'I created you and the moon, and you believe in the moon and not me.'

Coal goes north.

The word 'aryan' means 'noble' or 'peasant'.

Morning largely no food, starving until Vijayavadu after noon.

The soil colour here is reddish, which is good for pottery and not necessarily bad for rice. There are also banana and sugarcane palm.

Once in a while you see albinos and people whose skin is seemingly incompletely bleached.

Somebody tries to move my bag.

'Hey! That's my bag!'

Firstly it is not a bag. It is a rucksack. Secondly it is not mine. It is God's.

A selfish family. A family is always selfish. There is a selfish family coming up, move about and take people's seats. But the daughter was young and beautiful, and studies third year at a *vidyalaya* (university). I started talking with her, so the old man moved me to another, better seat.

Cloths are worn in long strips, wound around the body. You can wind it around your body in such a way that the lower edge of the cloth meets edge-on with the upper edge of the same on your back. Then the remaining of the piece goes over your shoulder from behind and drops down to cover the front part of your body.

Or you could wind one end of it around your waist to cover the lower part of your body, your legs and down to ankles. Then the remaining of the cloth goes across and over your shoulder from your front to your back.

Are cloths in Thailand imported from India?

I do not know when I am having my stroke. What with Alzheimer disease, AIDS and others.

'What country?'

'Lanna', sometimes 'Siam'. They are the smallest ones I could think of. By now they are both gone. Smallest is best.

Women here are so ugly. I guess that was why Siddhattha left his palace to find Truth.

The soil becomes redder still. There is a marsh the water in which is all red. The ground is moist. This is a land that does not lack water.

On the train from morning till night, going on and on.

On rippled water the sun's reflection looks like a column. On still water it looks like the sun.

I have a red spot between my brows. It is no paint but in my skin. This is my home. Long time ago it was one.

An old woman got up, followed her children away. She had left her shoes behind.

After the train reached Pondicherry I began to look for some book-shops for a dictionary of Tamil. The town looked its famous french influence. But the early afternoon streets were very quiet because most shops and shopping activities, in fact any activities at all, started around 4 pm. Then it goes on until late at night. I had some biscuits at a grocery. I bought some old books of Mahābhārata in Sanskrit and Hindi. I found some Tamil dictionaries, but they were expensive and the shop would give no discount. I was to find out later that no book shops in Pondicherry give any discount.

There are about nine Pondicherry's but there is only one real one, which has its french influences. The others have other names, but are sometimes called by that name, a fact the reason of which I had not managed to find out.

I walked to the ocean and then along the promenade. There was a big statue of Gandhi on the promenade, walking west into India towards the french city. A little further on I found a tourist information office, and was given a map of the streets in the town. This greatly helped my quest for dictionaries. But in the end, in spite of the map or perhaps because of it, I only grudgingly bought one dictionary. That was a paperback English-Tamil dictionary which, though not what I had wanted, was 65 rupees and, albeit the fact there was no discount, was still affordable.

At a Catholic church nearby there was some festivity going on, presumably for Christmas. After it had finished and people came streaming out, I walked in and found myself a place to kneel down and pray. My prayers are only conversation with God, and seldom or never askings for anything.

I did some Internet for one hour before I reached the railway station. It was 20 rupees. The station when I found it gave me such a shock because it was shut. This was the first time I had ever seen a train station in India shut its gates during the night. Even the

Kolayat Station in a remote Rajasthan's desert let people come in and sleep on the floor, or on whatever place they may find there. I do not know whether it is true what I was late told, that there were only two trains leaving from the station daily, and those were both in the afternoon. But a station so unfriendly it shuts the gates on people! This was scandalous! Unheard of! The English would have said this was meanly french.

But never mind, because luckily there were plenty of buses. So I walked the two kilometres to the bus station, or bus stand as it was called here, and got on a bus to find myself later in Varkala where I moved myself from the bus into the waiting room of a railway station.

Passenger trains are cheaper than second-class unreserved tickets. Are both called 'ordinary ticket', or the former 'ordinary' while the latter 'general' ticket?

The Nagari river is dried but the river-bed we crossed is wide.

In urine therapy you drink your own urine daily or when you are ill to boost your immunity. It is believed by those who practise this that your urine contains vitamins, minerals and much of the beneficial enzymes which are discarded by the kidney simply because it could not absorb them in one go. Drinking the urine allows the reuse of these things and other useful materials generated by your body. The first part of urine washes the ducts, the last part may contain solid particles. So it is said that you should drink the middle part.

Gandhi drank his own urine when he was sick, unless I am mistaken with malaria. He got better after that.

The soil is dark brown, very rich soil. The ground is covered in green and moist with rain.

What are the religions of Tamil and southern people?

That hideous desert thorn (Babul?) grows here too. Has it come with the train?

Numbers of national trains are in four digits, those of local ones are in three and sometimes begin with an 's'.

The land so rich where vegetation rules.

To jump off a fast-running train, brace yourself against the front handle and push back with all your force.

So rich is this land where plants rule.

Where we stop there is no platform. But people get on and off

with tickets. There is only a path that leads to train doors.

What happened to the cows in Pakistan after the separation of that country from India?

At Walajabad Station the train stops and everyone ran to look at a film shooting. I need not go. I am in the middle of a film now.

Why do you have to roll up a sleeping bag? You may wrap it up and it consumes less space that way.

Look at Pakistan, they had the determination and the gut. Indians and Pakistanis meeting each other in the UK said that their languages, that is Hindi and Urdu are very similar to each other. Indians in India insist they are totally different.

Students of mixed height stand in rows at a school.

We pass several lakes. I wonder where are the boundary lines between a lake and a pond and a puddle.

30/11/04

On the last day of this month I went by train to Trivandrum. If you wondered where this town was on the map, it is on the exactly the same place where Tiruvanandapuram is. This trip led us down nearly to the southmost part of the land. But by then it was already dark and you could not see a thing. So it could have been in India or Russia as far as you could tell.

1/12/04

Trivandrum is a fairly big town, but I missed it anyhow. I always missed a station here if it was not the last one. I got off to wait in a waiting room, fell asleep there, and got on the train after next back to the place. I had already been here once. But this time it was different because I walked to the Kerala University, had a look inside it, and bought some books from the university's facility. Out on the streets there seemed to be three different groups of people protesting for something. One of these was all female university students dressed in black. The streets between the university and the train station were littered with many bookshops. There were also the YMCA, YWCA and library of the British Council. Similar to in Pondicherry there were also many churches here.

2/12/04

I found myself in Bangalore and bought some more dictionaries. My rucksack and my carrying bags by now had become all books, and therefore very heavy. So I took the auto-rickshaw twice, was given one private copy of an official English-Kannada dictionary at the Karnataka and Culture because the book was out of stock, and found myself back at the station, where I was attacked by one man and a few days later wrote a complaint in New Delhi.

3/12/04

I was on the train that was going to New Delhi. And last night somebody had stolen a pair of eye-glasses from my rucksack.

Letters of complaint

19 November 2004
Adesus Station

To whom it may concern,

I want to report an incident which happened to me some fifteen minutes ago on the train from Samakhiali towards Bhildi. It happened when we stopped at Shivilakha Station. Two men tried to pull me off the train. They beat me up and I was wounded at a few places, as well as my trousers torn. Please investigate this incident and give me a reply in writing. Thank you! Oh, I think they who beat me up said they were Musalman.

Dr Kit Tyabandha
1564/11 Prajarasdrasaya 1 Road
Bangkok 10800, Thailand.

There has been no reply.

Radhanpur Police Station
19th November 2004

To whom it may concern,

I would like to report an unpleasant incident which happened to me on the train 456, and would appreciate an investigation and the report of it to be sent to me afterwards to the address I give below.

Two men who got up the train at Lakadia had beaten me up when we stopped at Shivilakha just before they got off the train. Mr Jain who is the train's conductor (guard) had witnessed the incident. The two men tried to pull me off the train, and I got a wound on my elbow and another one on my knee. My trousers are also torn.

If possible please see the crime above punished according to the law of the country. I also hope you would not ruin further the reputation of your country by ignoring this. Thank you very much. (I have put some bandages on the wound, perhaps no further medical examination is needed.)

Dr Kit Tyabandha
1564/11 Prajarasdrasaya 1 Road
Bangkok 10800, Thailand

This letter was handed to Police Constable Kulambhai, S I GRP Gandhidham (Kutch) Railway Police Station, Phone 02036 220095 (Gujarat.) There has been no reply.

New Delhi Railway Police Station
4th December 2004

To the police force of India and to whom it may concern,

I want to report a theft which occurred to me on the train Karnataka Express, 2627, on the night of 2nd December 2004 . I was sitting on that train, in the coach S8, and fell asleep. Shortly after 11 pm I woke up and found that my rucksack's pocket had been opened. I had lost one pair of eye-glasses worth the equivalent of Rs 10,000.

As I am moving to London soon, and still do not know my new address there yet, I would appreciate if you could keep this theft on your record, possibly investigate it for me and let me know in writing to me at the address of my colleague given below. Thank you.

KNT
Dr Kit Tyabandha
c/o V Sriwayudhya
God's Ayudhya's Defence
1564/11 Prajarasdrasaya 1 Road, Bangkok 10800, Thailand.

Many things happened on my last train to New Delhi. I reported some of them at the police station in front of the New Delhi Station. Some day I shall write a murder story like Agatha Christie. But the Indian police were very bad. They did not want me to report this, and told me to go away. I had to go down on my knees for this because I wanted to report. What kind of police are these who intimidate a victim.

New Delhi International Airport
5th December 2004

To the Tourist Police of India and to whom it may concern,

I would like to report to you something that had happened to me when I first arrived in India. On the morning of 23rd October I hired a prepaid taxi from a tourist information counter (with yellow sign) near the door which leads to the bus connection to Terminal 1. I told them that I wanted to go to the Tourist Information Office on Janpath Road, at Connaught Place. I paid Rs 150 at the counter. The taxi took me to a place approximately 5 kilometres away from Connaught Place, told me I was at the place where I wanted to go, and collected another Rs 100 from me as well as took away the receipt, telling me he must have the latter. (I think I signed up for the taxi under the name Kit.)

Later when I questioned that the place was no Connaught Place, and demanded that he take me to the place promised, he wanted more money, if I remember correctly Rs 100 more. When I refused to do this he left me there and I had to walk to Connaught Place and Janpath myself via a Hanuman Circle and some construction of express way. Please investigate this matter, and if possible let me know the results in writing. Thank you very much.

Dr Kit Tyabandha
(My Address: 1564/11 Prajarastrasaya 1 Road)
Bangkok 10800, Thailand.)
arthur.tyabandha@web.de

This letter was handed over to the tourist police at the New Delhi International Airport. The name of the officer I met there was SI PC Yadav who seemed to be very helpful. But there has been no reply since.

Tickets and receipts	
	29/12/03
Bangkok–Delhi–Bangkok. TG 315, 22 Oct 2004, 19:50; TG 316, 6 Dec 2004, 00:05. Free mileage ticket from Thai Airways. For TG315 the seat number was 48F.	
	22/10/03
\$15. 81.40 Rs/\$. Rs 1220. State Bank of India, IGIA Exchange Bureau, New Delhi. 0027046.	
	25/10/04
Fried rice. Rs 33. J & K Tourism Development Corp Ltd Sgr. 112906. Foods here are very expensive. They probably pay a lot to the bus driver to bring them customers. The fried rice had nothing but oil and a few tiny seeds.	
	27/10/04
Jammu Tawi–Agra Cantt. Rs 163. II, 785 km, 24746280, R6154, 21:05; Via PNP–TRD–MTJ. After I paid addition fee tomorrow I would sit at S5, 17.	
	28/10/04
Agra Cantt–Nagpur. Rs 187. II Superfast, 896 km, 32486300, 3679, 19:38; Via ET.	
	29/10/04
Nagpur Jn–Mumbai CST. Rs 179 plus reservation Rs 150. II Superfast, 837 km, 51083648, 2611, 13:30; excess fare 51863648, A949179. 2810, NGP to CST, 16, S7. The reservation ticket had my ticket number wrong. It gave a stamp of Divi Chief Ticket Inspector Bhusawal.	
	30/10/04
Mumbai CST–Panvel. Rs 14 plus MUTP surcharge Rs 1. 8/03/22, 56663.	
Panvel–Chiplun. v Rs 72. Via Rohe, 8/03/20, 83688.	
	31/10/04
Madgaon–Trivandrum C. Rs 198. 2S Exp, 1071 km, 14203394, 00:03; Via TOK SRR.	
	1/11/04
Trivandrum Ctrl–Chennai Egmore. Rs 164. II, 793, 09139559, 1200, 03:23; Via NCJ MDU VRI.	
	2/11/04
Chennai Central–Vijayawada Jn. Rs 116. II Superfast, 12128917, 1462, 13:05; Via GDR.	
	3/11/04
Vijayawada Jn–Visakhapatnam. Rs 91. II, 351 km, 09078615, 0019, 01:29; Via EE NDD SLO DVD.	
Dormitory bed. Rs 35. Visakhapatnam, South Eastern Railway.	

25867, 17:35.

04/11/04

Visakhapatnam–Howrah. Rs 186. II Supf, 882 km, 06683257, 1164, 03:39; Via VZM KUR KGP.

5/11/04

Howrah–Guwahati Jn. Rs 190. II, 997 km, 33007120, 0174, 11:50; Via DKAE RPH NFK MLDT NJP RNY. 5625.

6/11/04

Guwahati BG–Dibrugarh Town. Rs 129 plus Rs 109 reservation. 563 km. 10815; excess fare 067331. 5603, S2, B6. From GMY to TSK, S2, B7. A Travel Ticket Examiner must be extremely cunning. (Indian lore)

7/11/04

Dibrugarh Town–Guwahati. Rs 185 changed to 223, plus Rs 20 berth reservation. 560km, 07740; berth reservation 298811; Via TSK. FS1, B18.

8/11/04

Guwahati Bg–New Jalpaiguri. Rs 104. 427 km, 62203.

9/11/04

Darjeeling–Kurseong. Ticket on the toy train. Rs 12. DY 31 km. 80948.

New Jalpaiguri Jn Bg–Patna Jn. Rs 132 changed to 140. Via MLDT, 02824, 2ME, 637 km, *Śubh yātrā* [Save journey].

10/11/04

Sirka. Rs 20. J G Carr & Son, Dak Bungalow Road, Patna 800 001. Phone 2222372, Gram BESTORE, No 2589, CST No PTW 12(C), BST No PTW 12(R) BOTH Dt 30–4–84.

Rs 22. 804346.

11/11/04

Patna Jn–Varanasi. Rs 66. II, 229 km, 53687470, R11664, 03:50; Via MGS.

Rs 22. 538941.

12/11/04

Varanasi–Sarnath. Rs 6. II Ord, 11 km, 53856738, R11665, 08:53. Instead of going to Sarnath I was put on 5160, I guess aka Satna Express, to Raipur.

13/11/04

Raipur Jn–Aurangabad. Rs 200. II Supf, 993 km, 00133069, 2260, 07:47; Via NGP MMN. I got lost several times. On the back of this ticket was written '2716', '2130 to Pune', and also '2124 to Mumbai'.

17/11/04

Jalgaon Jn–Ahmedabad Jn. Rs 124. II, 540 km, 57095758, 3166,

00:20; Via ST. 8034 to Ankleshwar Jn.

Gujarati-English dictionary, Vol 1-2. Rs 150. Liberty Book Depot, 67 Below Bridge, Gandhi Road, Ahmedabad 380001; Phone 25355755, 25352067. 119444.

18/11/04

Ahmadabad-Samakhiali MG. Rs 70. II, 248 km, 59484426, 2566, 05:46; Via VG JN. 4311, pf 3, 6:30-6:40. I guess that this train stopped at Ahmedabad for half an hour.

19/11/04

Samakhiali MG-Bhildi. Rs 32 changed to 33. 8/01/3, O, 203, 19356. I wrote 456 on the back, so I guess that that was the train number.

P Dosa. Rs 8. Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corp Ltd, 2nd Fl, New Administrative Bldg, D N Road, CST Mumbai 400 001.

20/11/04

Bhildi Jn-Jodhpur. Rs 43. O, 306, 44803.

21/11/04

Jodhpur Jn-Jaisalmer. Rs 79. II, 295 km, 63454104, 2564, 05:01. 4059, pf 4, 17:30, 1 hr late.

23/11/04

Kolayat-Lalgarh Jn. Rs 11 changed to 12. 49034. *Āpakī yātrā maṅgal-may ho.*, Wish you a happy journey; *UR*, NR.

Bikaner-Ajmer Jn. Rs 122. II Superfast, 24316745, 3543; Via MTD FL. I missed Purla the following day, and wanted to get on 2467 from pf 2 at 5 am. But I guess I overslept and had to catch a passenger train later on instead.

25/11/04

Ajmer Jn-Purna Jn. Rs 193 plus Mela surcharge Rs 3. II, 1018 km, 03930426, 2671, 13:04; Via RTM KNW AK; surcharge 29579. 9769.

26/11/04

Purna-Secunderabad. Rs 114. 15116. 21:30, pf 1, broad-gauge.

28/11/04

Hyderabad-Tirupati. Rs 158. II, 747 km, 22228920, 3334, 04:39; Via KZJ PZA GDR. 7406, pf 6, 5:30 am.

Standard thali meal. Rs 25. Deepam Food Plaza, Platform No 1, Tirupati Railway Station. 22:34.

29/11/04

Tirupati-Pondicherry. Rs 42. II Ord, 286 km, 20808395, 2371, 3:10; Via RU AJJ CGL VM. 195, 4 am Tirupati-Pondicherry, pf 3. I also wrote down on the back, 195, 23 pm Pondicherry-Tirupati. Perhaps it means that the train from Pondicherry arrives in Tirupati at 23 pm each day. I found the station at Pondicherry closed earlier than 23 pm, so that could not have been the time that train leaves Pondicherry.

30/11/04

Villupuram Jn–Trivandrum Central. Rs 142. 01634. 6127, pf 2
chanted to 1, 9:50. I missed my stop and took 6348 back to Trivandrum
Central.

1/12/04

Uppuma. Rs 5. VRR/TVC. Trivandrum station's restaurant.

Uppuma. Rs 5. VRR/TVC. Trivandrum station's restaurant.

Trivandrum Ctrl–Bangalore City. Rs 172. II, 857 km, 17941737,
1763, 14:50; Via ERN CBE. 6322, pf 2, 16:05.

2/12/2004

Bangalore City–New Delhi. Rs 325. II Superfast, 2480 km,
00391449, 0313, 16:13; Via SSPN GY DD MMR. 2627, pf 1, 18:30. Some-
body had written 565 on the back of this ticket. I guess that was by the
staff who bullied me to pay the undeserved fine, presumably it means
that he wanted me to pay Rs 565 more.

4/12/04

New Delhi Station–Super Bazar. Rs 2. DL-IP, A 7946, R.No. 108.

5/12/04

Super Bazar–A junction to Delhi International Airport. Rs 10. Ākāś,
7855. Instead of letting me go to the domestic airport, Terminal I, and
then let me find a free shuttle bus from there to Terminal 2, the bus
dropped me here to let me go there on my own. Perhaps this was the
only way, or else they thought I might be in a hurry to catch my plane.
From the junction a police put me in a taxi and told the driver that I
had no money, as I had told him, so the taxi drove me to the airport for
free and would not take any money from me.

Travelling information

Authors' profile

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Education

2004	PhD	University of Manchester (UK)
1995	MSc	University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UK)
1993	BEng	Electrical Engineering Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)
1992	BSc	Computer Science Ramkhamhaeng University (Thailand)
1991	BEng	Mineral Engineering Chulalongkorn University (Thailand)
1983	6 th Form Certificate	Ashburton College (New Zealand)